



The REDHEAD

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery



Fall 2023

A Special Committee of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Vol. 17 No. 4

RHWO NEWS

High Acorn Production Equals RHWOs Overwintering at Cedar Creek

Pin Oak acorn production appears to be a significant determining factor and predictor of Red-headed Woodpeckers



Boo 10/10/2023

(RHWOs) overwintering in the Cedar Creek ESR. Last year the Pin Oak acorn production at Cedar Creek was the lowest recorded in the annual surveys, and all the RHWOs migrated away. This year the Pin Oak acorn production was



Boo 10/10/2023

the second highest recorded yet, and it appears that all or most of the RHWOs are preparing to stay for the winter. For the last 6 years a survey was conducted of the acorns

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A Note from the Chair

Fall 2023

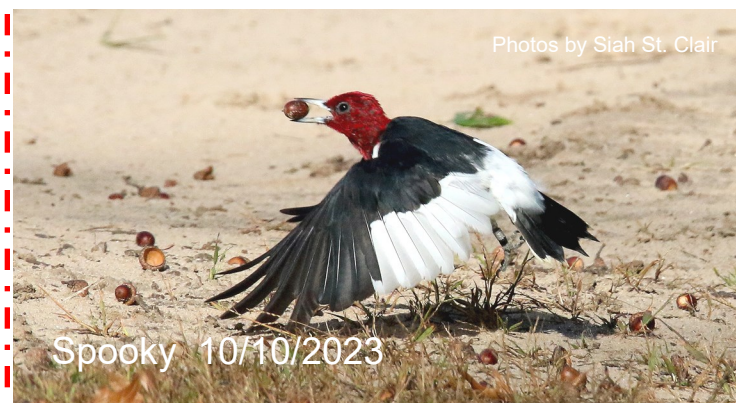
I hope everyone is enjoying the fall colors and migrating birds during this season of changes.

This has been a busy year for Red-headed Woodpeckers (RHWOs) and the work being done to help them. A lot is being learned through the new RHWO roost study, the State-wide RHWO Bioacoustics study, and the thousands of new RHWO nest camera videos. The RHWO nest survey activity at Cedar Creek ESR has shown 2023 to be one of the most productive years ever recorded for RHWOs at Cedar Creek ESR. One nest had eight fledglings between their first and second broods. The previous record for one pair in one year was 6 fledglings. And there were more second broods than ever recorded before, with over 50% of nests having second broods.

Thanks to Dr. Elena West and her team of research technicians for their many 2:00 AM searches to locate beeping transmitters in trees with RHWOs roosting somewhere up above. And for slogging through swamps and brush to retrieve bioacoustic devices that record RHWOs around the State. And thanks to the many volunteers who also helped locate and survey nests throughout the summer and fall in different locations.

Thanks also to all of you. It is your memberships and financial support that allows much of this work to happen and result in RHWO population levels to improve. We have plans in place to assist with these research and survey activities in 2024. Membership renewal and donation forms will be sent in a few weeks for 2024. We hope that you can continue to support this important project.

Siah St. Clair, Steering Committee Chair



Spooky 10/10/2023

Note From the Editor

The Editor requests your help in managing the activities of the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR). We continue to seek candidates for the Steering Committee and for help with the newsletter. We are particularly interested in volunteers with computer and writing skills. Contact the Editor or any of the Steering Committee members.

The RhWR continues to have problems with our website. This is a continuing problem with our partner who runs the website. They are upgrading their website and it is taking far too long. Our content will be uploaded when theirs is finished. This has been a very frustrating process.

The RhWR has also been having problems obtaining and getting credit for donations made online. We believe this problem has now been fixed. The Editor has some concern about the fees charged for these online donations. It appears the fees are about 7.5%. Currently we don't know if this fee is on a sliding scale, i.e., if it is less for larger donations. Please use the online donation, if it is convenient for you, but the RhWR will have more funds to help the RHWO if you pay the \$0.66 for a Forever Stamp.

Jerry Bahls, Editor

Acorns, Continued from page 1

produced on the same 200 oak trees at Cedar Creek. An accepted protocol is used to count the acorns. Two observers use binoculars and count how many acorns each can see in 15 seconds on each tree. The results of each observer are totaled and recorded as the number of acorns/30 sec. In the fall of 2022, the average number of acorns counted per tree in 30 seconds for Pin Oaks was 3. This fall (2023) the average was 152 acorns seen in 30 seconds. So many thousands were on every tree. Fallen acorns on the ground under the tree are also counted and recorded within a randomly chosen one-meter circle.

For several weeks now the RHWOs have been observed busily collecting acorns, banging them into small pieces, and then caching the pieces into crevices in live and dead trees within their summer territories. Both the males and females are actively doing this, as well as their fledglings. The fledglings seem to need considerable time to learn this skill and still look for handouts from their parents. But they are often chased away as the parents try to have the fledglings become independent. Some fledglings hang close to a parent, and some parents are more tolerant than others.

The Pin Oak acorns appear to be the only acorns cached, even though there are plenty of Bur Oak acorns on the ground as well. Pin Oak acorns have a higher acid content, which may make them less apt to decay while in storage through the winter.

One impact of staying here through the winter is that the RHWOs that stay will be able to begin nesting a couple of weeks earlier in the spring of 2024 with a better chance of nesting success.

Siah St. Clair



Volunteers needed for MOU Paper Session

The annual MOU Paper Session uses volunteers to provide the refreshments for the event. Traditionally the three metro chapters of the National Audubon Society rotates the responsibility for these volunteers between the chapters. This year is Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis' turn. The ACM Board has asked the RhWR to supply the volunteers and the RhWR has gladly accepted the responsibility. Please contact Siah St. Clair (stclairs@comcast.net, 763 234-6146) if you are willing to help with the refreshments or to help at our information table at the event. The Session is at the UM St. Paul Student Center on Dec. 2nd and begins at 9:00 am.

RhWR Contact Information

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

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Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

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Website - www.minneapolisaudubon.org/rhwo2
Dr Elena West, Research Blog Website - www.rhworesearch.org

RhWR Fund Raiser

The Redheaded Woodpecker Recovery's (RhWR) fund raiser is **Jim Stengel**. He can be contacted at **612 721-9083** or at **jbstengel66@gmail.com**. If you know of an organization or individual that will donate funds for Red-headed Woodpecker research, please contact Jim. The RhWR plans to continue doing RHWO research at the Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve.

PBS documentary “*Evolution Earth - Grasslands*”*

Reported by Jim Howitz

On Wednesday October 4, the local PBS station in the Twin Cities showed the fifth episode of the documentary series *Evolution Earth*. *Grasslands* dealt with the effects of animals on grasslands in South America, Africa, and North America. The segment on North America showed how prairie dogs and bison affect their grassland habitat. According to the narration:

"Researchers are discovering that bison, like the wildebeest on the Serengeti, are transforming our grasslands in ways never expected.

Here in Minnesota, studies on one of the last few remaining herds of bison are revealing how bison can affect the growth of trees.



Iza

Photos via PBS

Suddenly, oaks are appearing... not in a forest but spread out amongst the grasslands.

These trees need the bison to clear the tall grasses away, preventing fires taking hold and helping their saplings reach maturity."

The scenes are of savanna at the Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve maintained by prescribed burning and the bison herd present there in the summer. The narration continues:

"Once, this kind of oak savanna stretched throughout the Midwest. Today, only 0.02% of it remains... and with the oaks come animals rarely seen in decades like red-headed woodpeckers."

Here two scenes of a Red-headed Woodpecker are shown. The first bird is Tomek (red band), a male, and the second his mate Iza (yellow band). These are two of our best-known birds and to my knowledge the first to appear on national television.

Tomek has fledged 12 young over 8 years. Iza has fledged 8 young over 4 years. We have had a nest camera on their nest tree since 2020. We have attached tracking devices on both of them. We know that Iza spent the winter of 2020-2021 close to the Mississippi River northwest of St. Louis Missouri.



Tomak

Photos via PBS

In years when the birds remained at Cedar Creek, we found their winter roost trees. If the documentary had focused more on the woodpeckers than the bison, much could have been said about these two remarkable birds.

* This PBS Documentary aired on the local PBS Station (tpt) and can be viewed by streaming it on PBS.

Membership Dues

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) receives most of its operating revenues from membership dues.

- 1) Membership is \$20.00 (\$50 is preferred)/calendar year.
- 2) The newsletter is published for members only.

Send your membership application and renewal to -

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis
RhWR
PO Box 3801
Minneapolis, MN 55403-0801

Or make an electronic donation to the RhWR by going to <http://www.minneapolisaudubon.org/rhwo2>.

Thank you for your continued support.

Next RhWR Steering Committee

The RhWR Steering Committee usually meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm every 3 months. The next *virtual* meeting will be on November 15, 2023 at 7:00 pm. If you would like to participate, please contact Siah St. Clair to be added to the call list. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please encourage friends to attend also.

Important Dates

Steering Committee Meeting	Nov. 15, 2023
ACM Board Meeting	Nov. 20, 2023
MOU Paper Session	Dec. 2, 2023
Christmas Bird Count	Dec. 16, 2023

ALL meetings are *virtual* until further notice.

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis
PO Box 3801
Minneapolis MN 55403-0801

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Here

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Program Membership Application

☐ *I'd like to join!* Please add me as a member of the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (RhWR) at the rate of \$20/year (\$50 is suggested rate)! Please send my membership information to the address at right.

☐ *I'd like to renew!* Renew my RhWR membership for \$20/year (\$50 is suggested rate).

☐ *Yes, I'd like to join Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis also!* Please add me as a member of the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery (\$20, \$50 suggested) and the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis (\$20) at the rate of \$40/year. Please send my membership information to the address at right.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

E-MAIL _____

Send this application and make check payable to:

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis - RhWR
PO Box 3801
Minneapolis, MN 55403-0801